

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 EA-10 ISO-00 PM-05 NSC-05 SP-02
SS-15 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 L-03 MCT-01 EB-08
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R 181848Z MAY 78
FM AMEMBASSY PARIS
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1755
INFO AMEMBASSY KABUL
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN
AMEMBASSY ANKARA
AMEMBASSY JIDDA
AMCONSUL LAHORE
AMCONSUL KARACHI
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW
USLO PEKING
AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
AMEMBASSY BONN
AMEMBASSY ROME

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 PARIS 15902

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: FR, AF
SUBJECT: FRENCH VIEWS ON AFGHANISTAN

REF: A) TEHRAN 4547; B) KABUL 4018

1. SUMMARY: FRENCH SEE AFGHAN COUP D'ETAT AS FURTHER
STEP IN PROCESS BEGUN IN 1963. THEY BELIEVE REVOLUTION-
ARY REGIME WILL IN SHORT TERM SEEK TO CONSOLIDATE ITS
HOLD OVER ARMY AND NATIONAL TERRITORY WHILE TRYING TO
PROJECT A MODERATE LEFTIST IMAGE. BUT THEY SEE
BABRAK KARMAL AS REAL STRONG MAN AND FEAR THAT, WITH
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HIS LIEUTENANTS WELL PLACED IN PRESENT GOVERNMENT,
REGIME WILL LATER MOVE TOWARD MORE RADICAL ATTITUDES
AND METHODS. FRENCH SUSPECT THAT SOVIETS GAVE AT
LEAST TACIT ENCOURAGEMENT TO ABDUL QADIR, BUT THAT
EVENTS PRECIPITATED WHAT AFGHAN LEFTISTS THOUGHT WOULD
COME ABOUT ONLY IN ANOTHER YEAR OR TWO. FRENCH HAVE
SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT CULTURAL INTERESTS IN AFGHANIS-

TAN AND WILL TRY TO MAINTAIN THEM AS LONG AS REGIME REMAINS WITHIN ACCEPTABLE LIMITS. FRENCH WILL BE INTERESTED IN RECEIVING INFORMATION ON OUR VIEW OF AFGHAN SITUATION. END SUMMARY.

2. SENIOR QUAI OFFICIAL WITH RESPONSIBILITY FOR AFGHANISTAN, AND LONG EXPERIENCE IN THE AREA, GAVE US FRENCH VIEW OF CURRENT SITUATION THERE. HE SAID FRENCH SEE RECENT COUP D'ETAT ESSENTIALLY AS COMPLETION OF PROCESS OF REPLACEMENT OF OLD REGIME WHICH WAS BEGUN IN 1963. THEY FEAR THAT AFGHAN REVOLUTION COULD EVENTUALLY TAKE ON RADICAL COLORATION, BUT BELIEVE THAT IN THE SHORT TERM THE NEW REGIME APPEARS TO BE MOST INTERESTED IN CREATING THE APPEARANCE OF A MODERATE, NATIONALIST, NEUTRAL, LEFTIST REGIME. FRENCH SEE TARAKI AS A FIGUREHEAD CHOSEN TO PROJECT THIS MODERATE IMAGE, BUT THEY CONSIDER THE MORE EXTREME LEFTIST, VICE PREMIER BABRAK KARMAL, AS THE REAL POWER IN THE NEW REGIME, WITH LIEUTENANTS SERVING AS MINISTERS OF DEFENSE, INTERIOR AND FOREIGN AFFAIRS. THE IMMEDIATE OBJECTIVE OF THE REGIME WILL BE TO CONSOLIDATE ITS POWER AND CONTROL OVER THE ARMY AND THE NATIONAL TERRITORY, IN ORDER TO PRECLUDE ANY POSSIBLE COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY MOVES. REGIME IS MOVING IN THIS DIRECTION BY CREATING A NATIONAL POLITICAL STRUCTURE WHICH CAN HELP TO CONTROL THE ARMY. BUT FRENCH SEE CHANCES OF

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COUNTER-REVOLUTIONARY EFFORTS AS PRACTICALLY NIL, SINCE ARMY IS ONLY REAL POWER, AND ITS PRINCIPAL CADRES WERE TRAINED IN THE USSR.

3. ONCE REGIME HAS ESTABLISHED ITSELF BY CONSOLIDATING ITS POWER, AND BY DEFUSING HOSTILITY OF INTEL-LIGENTSIA, MULLAHS AND FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS BY PROJECTING A MODERATE LEFTIST IMAGE, FRENCH BELIEVE THERE IS A STRONG PROBABILITY THAT MORE RADICAL ELEMENTS, LED BY BABRAK KARMAL, WILL SHOW THEIR HAND. IN THIS LATER TIME FRAME, FRENCH DO NOT EXCLUDE THE POSSIBILITY OF EXTREMIST EXPERIMENTS IN AFGHANISTAN, BOTH ON INTERNAL MATTERS SUCH AS THE REFORM OF SOCIETY, AND IN RELATIONS WITH IRAN AND PAKISTAN, USING PACHTOU AND BELOUTCH ETHNIC GROUPS.

4. FRENCH ARE UNCERTAIN ABOUT DEGREE OF ACTUAL SOVIET ROLE IN COUP OR IN PRESENT SITUATION, BUT CLEARLY BELIEVE SOVIETS GAVE AT LEAST TACIT ENCOURAGEMENT TO QADIR TO ORGANIZE THE COUP, AND THAT SOVIETS HAVE MADE AN IMPORTANT STEP FORWARD IN THE AREA. OUR SOURCE ALLUDED TO WHAT HE CALLED THE "US-SOVIET UNDERSTANDING"

OF THE 1960'S THAT PERMITTED THE USSR TO HAVE A LARGE
INFLUENCE IN AFGHANISTAN, INCLUDING TRAINING AND

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AMEMBASSY ROME

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EQUIPPING THE ARMY, PROVIDED THE COUNTRY DID NOT
ACTUALLY BECOME A SOVIET SATTELITE. HE
CLEARLY THOUGHT SOVIETS WERE IN THE PROCESS OF AC-
QUIRING ANOTHER SATTELITE AND WRYLY RECOUNTED THE
REPORT OF SOME FRENCH TECHNICIANS WHO, DURING A VISIT
TO TECHNICAL INSTALLATIONS IN THE USSR NEAR THE AFGHAN
BORDER, HAD SEEN A MAP ON WHICH AFGHANISTAN WAS DEPICT-
ED AS ANOTHER SOVIET REPUBLIC. FRENCH BELIEVE
LEFTIST TACTICS IN AFGHANISTAN PRIOR TO THE COUP REVEAL
THAT THEY WERE PLANNING ON A LONGER PREPARATORY PERIOD
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BEFORE SEEKING POWER. ONE RESULT OF THIS IS THAT THE GOVERNING PARTIES ACTUALLY REPRESENT A VERY SMALL PROPORTION OF THE POPULATION. TIGHTER REPRESSION OF THE LEFT PRECIPITATED THE COUP A YEAR OR TWO EARLIER THAN THE LEFTISTS HAD PLANNED.

5. FRANCE'S DIRECT INTERESTS IN AFGHANISTAN ARE SMALL, BUT SYMBOLICALLY IMPORTANT. THEY INCLUDE PRINCIPALLY THE FRANCO-AFGHAN LYCEE WHICH HAS EDUCATED MANY AFGHAN LEADERS FOR SEVERAL GENERATIONS. THE CORNERSTONE OF THE NEW LYCEE BUILDING WAS LAID BY POMPIDOU DURING HIS VISIT TO KABUL IN 1968. IN ADDITION THERE IS AN ON-GOING FRENCH ARCHEOLOGICAL MISSION AND A FRENCH MAPPING TEAM IN AFGHANISTAN, BOTH OF WHICH HAVE BEEN FREE TO TRAVEL THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY, EVEN TO REMOTE AREAS. FRENCH ARE WATCHING THE NEW REGIME'S ATTITUDE TOWARD THE LYCEE AND THESE TWO GROUPS FOR SIGNS OF CHANGE. THEY BELIEVE THAT CHANGES IN CURRICULUM, OR OUTRIGHT NATIONALIZATION OF THE LYCEE, AND POSSIBLE RESTRICTIONS ON TRAVEL OR EJECTION OF THE OTHER GROUPS, WILL BE KEY INDICATORS OF THE NEW REGIME'S REAL POLITICAL INTENTIONS. FOR THEIR PART THE FRENCH ARE PLANNING TO MAINTAIN THESE ACTIVITIES AS LONG AS POSSIBLE, UNLESS THE REGIME BECOMES SO RADICALIZED AS TO RENDER THIS IMPOSSIBLE. FRENCH ALSO ANTICIPATE REQUESTS FOR ASYLUM FROM A CERTAIN NUMBER OF AFGHAN MEDICAL AND OTHER STUDENTS IN FRANCE, AND PROBABLY ALSO THE AFGHAN AMBASSADOR HERE, WHO HAS CLOSE LINKS TO THE DAOUD REGIME.

5. THE FRENCH ARE MOST INTERESTED IN OUR PERCEPTIONS OF THE AFGHAN SITUATION, AND WILL BE GLAD TO EXCHANGE INFORMATION AND VIEWS WITH US, AS PART OF CONSULTATIONS
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WITH ALLIES SUGGESTED IN REFTELS. WE BELIEVE SUCH CONSULTATIONS CAN BE MUTUALLY BENEFICIAL; IN THIS CONNECTION WE WOULD APPRECIATE RECEIVING STATE 119925, WHICH EVIDENTLY SUMMARIZED WASHINGTON VIEW OF AFGHANISTAN SITUATION, BUT WHICH WE DID NOT RECEIVE.
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